United Nations E/2009/NGO/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 May 2009

Original: English

Substantive session of 2009
Geneva, 6-31 July 2009
Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health

Statement submitted by Legião da Boa Vontade, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2009/100.

09-32852 (E) 270509

Please recycle

Statement*

In contribution to the Annual Ministerial Review of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and to the Development Cooperation Forum, the Legion of Good Will (LGW), a Brazilian civil organization founded on 1 January 1950, with general consultative status at the ECOSOC, presents recommendations to the honorable participants of this Council 2009 High-Level Segment Meeting, to be held in the city of Geneva, Switzerland, under the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health".

The information was compiled from successful practices implemented by the LGW throughout its 60 years of existence and also based on a vast process of public multistakeholder consultation conducted by the organization with the purpose of enriching the plurality and the geographic representation of the proposed theme. In this manner, we hereby submit the results of the 6th Multistakeholder Solidary Society Network Forum and of the 3rd Innovation Fair, under the theme "Health and Quality of Life — Fulfilling the Eight Millennium Development Goals", both carried out by the LGW, from 20 March to 2 April 2009, in Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina.

With the purpose of identifying successful practices, the forum conducted a research and organized in-person meetings with representatives from civil society organizations, companies, government agencies, universities and research institutes in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Brasília (Brazil), La Paz (Bolivia), Montevideo (Uruguay), Asuncion (Paraguay) and Buenos Aires (Argentina). During the conferences, there were innovation fairs and exhibitions of themed panels with the support of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA); of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) in Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and in Argentina; of the United Nations Population Fund in Argentina (UNFPA); of the United Nations Information Center for Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil (CINU and UNIC-Rio); and of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Argentina and in Paraguay.

The activities promoted by the 6th Multistakeholder Solidary Society Network Forum meet the LGW's mission to "Promote Education and Culture with Spirituality, so there may be Food, Security, Health and Work for everyone, to form the Ecumenical Citizen". The LGW's actions contribute directly to ensure Human Rights, advancing towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and increasing the standards of health and the quality of life of the population. Annually, the Organization provides seven million services and benefits to the population in situation of vulnerability throughout Brazil and has exported its social technology to several countries, acting today with autonomous permanent bases in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Portugal and in the United States of America.

Success Stories: The core of the recommendations brought up by the LGW refers to the Social Determinants of Health, in other words, the conditions in which Human Beings live and work. This includes complex issues involving habitation areas, sanitation, health services and education. It is the duty of the State to ensure health for the population, however, it is the society's role to monitor and demand the fulfillment of this right through legal mechanisms and with a direct participation (for

* Issued without formal editing.

example, the Health Councils in Brazil); above all, to ensure this right, it is fundamental to contribute with effective actions.

According to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), "Primary Health Care" is the strategy that presents the best results to promote public health in the Americas, since it encourages the prevention and early diagnosis of illness, besides representing significant cost savings for governments. Furthermore, it actively contributes towards reaching MDG 6: to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Despite the progress noticed throughout recent years, there are still many urban and rural communities with a low Human Development Index (HDI) in the continent. The LGW develops in several regions the *Charity Round*, a program through which the organization identifies sanitation problems in a given locality and then begins to teach emergency care procedures, such as: to have water boiled, the use of chlorine, to employ homemade oral rehydration therapy (ORT), to properly dispose of waste products, to eliminate potential breeding grounds for *dengue* (transmitted by the Aedes Aegypti mosquito) and other diseases. In partnership with specialized professionals, the organization conducts a systematic awareness program addressing issues such as personal hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and prevention of drug use, among others.

The LGW technicians detected in these regions the difficulty that many have in seeking guidance and continuing medical treatment due to social and economic problems, such as poor access to public roads and transportation (which hinders those with reduced mobility, among them, elderly people and the handicapped). Such factors also made the LGW to articulate in the communities an action called *Mobilization for Citizenship and Health*. This initiative is made up of volunteers, professionals from the LGW, partner organizations and universities that provide medical diagnosis and offer legal support. Thousands of people are cared for in each of these mobilizations employing low cost technology. For this program, the LGW's partners make available mobile medical units that enable medical examinations of greater complexity, besides dental treatment and urgent procedures. In these regions, the LGW also develops an *Acquaintanceship Program*, an initiative focused on demands and interests of groups brought together by affinities — such as young people, women and the elderly — through educational lectures and a joint quest for solutions.

In the context of the fourth and fifth Millennium Development Goals, to reduce Child Mortality and improve Maternal Health, the LGW recommends as a successful practice its *Baby Citizen Project*, which consists of supporting mothers that are in a situation of social vulnerability, encompassing the period that spans from the fourth month of pregnancy until the child completes one year of age. The concepts of family planning and that of responsible motherhood and fatherhood are dealt with together. This action strengthens the mother's self-esteem and her bond with the child, who requires affection and care for its development. The *Baby Citizen Project* encourages the mother to undergo prenatal tests and reinforces the importance of breastfeeding. Pregnant women who remain in the program are guaranteed to receive a complete layette and a food basket per month with proper food to complete their pregnancy diet.

In the context of MDG 1 (to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), it recommends working from the concept of Food and Nutritional Security. In the ongoing programs under the responsibility of the LGW, people are taught the importance of cultivating their own food and to make good use of the leftovers and portions of these foods which are normally discarded. The meal menus in the Schools, Community and Educational Centers, and Homes for Children and for the Elderly that belong to the Organization are prepared by nutritionists who are attentive to the identified nutritional needs. In the emergency services provided for the population, the LGW immediately makes available food items and meals for people who are below the line of poverty, especially in situations of calamity.

Recommendations: The Solidary Society Network created and articulated by the Legion of Good Will is composed by hundreds of civil society organizations, companies with social and environmental responsibility, universities, local governmental authorities and the media. The goal is to exchange experience and information, to hold in-person meetings and/or over the Internet, to favor lateral interactions towards the forming of partnerships, and especially to bring together experiences and recommendations to be discussed by the whole society.

Following below is a summary of the recommendations offered by the 6th Multistakeholder Solidary Society Network Forum of the LGW to the ECOSOC on the occasion of the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review.

- To encourage breastfeeding and to motivate the propagation of breast milk banks.
- To encourage the creation of community vegetable gardens in schools, motivating the adoption of healthy food programs for children.
- To perform a stricter verification of the nutritional value of foods presented in advertising campaigns.
- To make agricultural companies aware of the benefits of directing the exceeding production (which cannot be commercialized) to the underprivileged population. This can be made feasible through tax incentives.
- To increase free access to prescribed medications in different medical treatments or to reduce their cost.
- To train health professionals towards humanization in health care.
- To adopt an interdisciplinary method in prevention and treatment actions regarding health.
- To offer social and economic support to family members of patients who undergo high complexity treatment, so that they do not interrupt it.
- To incorporate accessibility principles and respect towards the diversity in all the public health policies, implementing specific policies for given segments, when necessary.
- To invest more in public policies for the prevention of diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis, among others, encouraging the participation of several individuals, including those that have the disease, in the debates on the theme.
- To systematize an educational proposal in educational institutions and in the media that encourages the collective awareness towards the complete health of the individual, by means of a spiritual-biopsychosocial perspective.
- To encourage the cooperation between different social actors and levels of the government, aligning strategies that promote health.

The Solidary Society Network recommends that all of the topics addressed may be worked on in schools, means of communication, public and private spaces, in order to encourage an even greater number of people to adopt healthy habits. Thus, it is a fact that policies and awareness campaigns reach the best results in the prevention of diseases.

Follow-Up: To strengthen the inspection mechanisms for the fulfillment of international agreements by countries in the field of health, encouraging the participation of civil society in venues for discussion such as councils, committees and others. Likewise, it is necessary to involve the communities themselves in the prevention of diseases, forming multipliers of this initiative among children, young people and adults.

Conclusion: The organized civil society and the private sector perform an essential role both through the development and financing of programs directed to the vulnerable layer of the population as well as through their participation in forums, networks and councils, with the purpose of monitoring and discussing issues with government authorities, and also contributing towards the full development of Public Policies. Information is an important resource of awareness for the challenges that modern society faces. Therefore, it is indispensable, for instance, to have environmental education campaigns in which the necessary care one must have with the environment is transmitted and the impact of the effects of its degradation on human health is discussed. In this manner, information takes on a center stage in the process towards improving the quality of life of the population.

The principles that guide the LGW actions in a broader sense are the Pedagogy of Affection and the Ecumenical Citizen Pedagogy. Through them, all of the actions described in this document, as well as others related to the organization social-and educational programs, become part of the full development of the Human Being and his/her eternal Spirit. The health of an individual cannot be considered simply from a biological standpoint, but also from his/her emotional, mental and spiritual health. From this perspective, the Legion of Good Will works on human and spiritual values in all of its programs. As the President of the LGW and creator of this educational proposal, José de Paiva Netto, ponders: "Our goal is to reach the greatness of the human Spirit, the builder of all things. And, just as the body requires nourishment to sustain itself, our eternal part requires transubstantial nourishment, without which it withers and falls ill. Health for the Spirit is singularized in the Fraternal Love, *'a basic principle of the Human Being, a generating factor of Life, which is everywhere and is everything'*. (...) There is no greater suffering than its absence (...), the vigorous foundation of healthy communities, since **social reform must come from the spiritual side**, in other words, from the creature's inner strength, which makes it powerful and indestructible in its altruistic ideal".